

Message Text

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PASS AGRICULTURE ELECTRONICALLY
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, GE
SUBJ: HONECKER COMMENTS ON AGRICULTURE

REF: BERLIN 3667

1. AT CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING MAY 24, PARTY CHIEF HONECKER, AMONG OTHER ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SUBJECTS, SPOKE ON AGRICULTURE. HE STRESSED THAT IT WAS MAIN TASK OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS TO ASSURE STABLE SUPPLY OF FOODSTUFFS. CONSIDERABLE STRESS LAID ON "LESSONS OF 1977 HARVEST" WHICH DEMONSTRATE DESIRABILITY OF AN EXPANDED RELIANCE ON LOCAL MANAGEMENT ROLE OF BEZIRK AND KREIS COUNCILS. HONECKER SAID ADHERENCE TO THIS LINE HAD PROVED USEFUL DURING SPRING PLANTING WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS HAMPERED IN PART BY POOR WEATHER.

2. HONECKER SAID THAT DEMAND FOR MEAT AND VEGETABLES HAD SURPASSED CONSUMPTION FORECASTS OF FIVE-YEAR PLAN AND GROWTH OF PRODUCTION IN THESE AREAS MUST BE
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ACCELERATED IN 1978.

3. HONECKER PLACED MAJOR BLAME ON WEATHER FOR SHORT-FALLS IN 1977 PRODUCTION TARGETS IN GRAIN, POTATOES AND SUGAR BEETS AND SAID THAT THE POLITBURO HAD RESPONDED WITH TIMELY IMPORTS OF FEED FROM NON-SOCIALIST COUNTRIES.

4. TO RAISE PRODUCTION IN ORDER TO MEET INCREASED DEMAND AND TO REDUCE IMPORTS, HONECKER MADE SEVERAL PROPOSALS. HE URGED INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY, MORE ATTENTION TO IRRIGATION AND DRAINING OF LAND, AND PRONOUNCED A BLESSING ON PRODUCTION OF FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND MEAT ON FARMERS' PRIVATE PLOTS, STRESSING THE USEFULNESS OF SUCH OUTPUT AS AN IMPORT SUBSTITUTE.

5. COMMENT: HONECKER'S COMMENTS SUGGEST NO CHANGE IN BASIC LINES OF PREVIOUSLY ENUNCIATED AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN GDR.

6. WE HAVE HEARD OF MEAT SHORTAGES IN SCATTERED LOCATIONS IN GDR. ECONOMIC EDITOR OF BERLINER ZEITUNG TOLD US THAT SHORTAGES ARE TIED TO EFFORT TO EXPORT MORE MEAT TO EARN HARD CURRENCY. WE WILL TRY TO CHECK THIS.

7. IN DISCUSSING INCREASED MEAT PRODUCTION, HONECKER DID NOT MENTION ANIMAL NUMBERS, WHICH WE HAVE BEEN TOLD ARE TO REMAIN STABLE THROUGH 1980, THE INCREASE IN LIVESTOCK OUTPUT COMING FROM GREATER EFFICIENCY OF PRODUCTION.

8. NEVERTHELESS, WE WERE STRUCK BY APPARENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMMITMENT OF GDR LEADERSHIP TO FOLLOW LEAD OF DEMAND SIDE OF DEMAND/SUPPLY EQUATION AS RELATES TO MAJOR FOOD ITEMS. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT DEPARTURES SUGGESTED IN HONECKER'S SPEECH WILL SOLVE SUPPLY PROBLEM NOR SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE AGRICULTURAL IMPORT NEEDS OF GDR. AT BEST, THE MEASURES MAY LEAD TO SOMEWHAT MORE PLENTIFUL SUPPLY OF VEGETABLES DURING SEASON OF LOCAL AVAILABILITY. END COMMENT. BOLEN

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